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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Nine French soldiers serving with UNPROFOR killed in accident on Bosnian mountain; 4 others seriously injured.

+ Secretary-General's plan for gender equality outlined at one-day conference on Women and United Nations attended by Hillary Rodham Clinton.

+ Commission on Narcotic Drugs opens in Vienna; will focus on economic and social consequences of drug abuse and trafficking.

+ President of International Court of Justice addresses Congress on International Law; says Court's advisory function should be extended to more organizations and States.

+ Administrative and Budgetary Committee approves diplomatic privileges, pensions for World Court judges and assistance to Disarmament Institute.

+ 1995 United Nations Population Award shared by African non-governmental organization and Secretary-General of International Planned Parenthood Federation.

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Nine French soldiers serving with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) were killed today in a tragic accident on Mount Igman, near Sarajevo. A UN spokesman said the soldiers were travelling on the snow-covered mountain, when their off-road vehicle plunged into a ravine. Four other soldiers were seriously injured. The Spokesman described the accident as UNPROFOR'S worst single tragedy.

Meanwhile, Special Representative Yasushi Akashi said today that while the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb leaders were still committed to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, they were accusing each other of bad faith. Mr. Akashi told correspondents at Sarajevo airport that UNPROFOR had been trying to promote dialogue to resolve disputes on the Agreement's implementation, and it was in the parties' best interests to start talks as

soon as possible. The Agreement and the cease-fire had been precarious from the beginning and he feared fighting could resume unless something was done in the next two or three weeks.

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Women and the United Nations was the theme of a one-day Conference at UN Headquarters today, which was dedicated to former United States first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt was a delegate to the United Nations in its early years and helped draft the Declaration of Human Rights.

In a message to the Conference, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said the recruitment and promotion of women at the United Nations had failed to live up to the promise of the Charter and lagged dismally behind what it should be. Member States had done no better. Only 6 out of 185 Missions were headed by women and there were very few women diplomats or foreign ministers. Stressing that the UN must lead the way, he said his Strategic Plan of Action was a way to achieve full gender equality in the Organization within the next five years. Currently, 15 percent of UN director-level posts and above are held by women.

The first lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton, told the Conference investing in women's health and education was essential to improving global prosperity and the United Nations must play a leadership role. Every one of its programmes, policies and decisions directly or indirectly affected women as they cared for children, managed households, and worked in their jobs. Women must be part of the UN process and demand that their rights and opportunities be respected in nations around the world, she said.

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The advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice were instrumental in preventive diplomacy, helping to avert conflict and deflate tension, according to its President, Mohammed Bedjaoui. He was addressing the United Nations Congress on Public International Law today, as it considered the peaceful disputes between States, including resort to and full respect of the Court. By providing legal interpretations during disputes and removing the threat of conflicts, the Court also helped international peace, he said. Access to its advisory opinions should be extended to more States and bodies, including regional organizations.

Yesterday, the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, Hans Correll, told the Congress it should appeal to world decision makers to act with prudence, refrain from the use of force and solve disputes peacefully. Those responsibilities could be translated as statesmanship, he said. International law was not the exclusive interest of a few specialists, but was an important ingredient in daily decision-making. Therefore, decision makers must make

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sure such law was applied and legal advice sought when important foreign policy decisions were being made.

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The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) today recommended that the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission on the disarmament of Iraq, his spouse and minor children residing in the United States, be granted diplomatic privileges and immunities.

The Committee also approved recommendations concerning the pension scheme for members of the International Court of Justice. According to a draft decision, the pensions of Judges elected to serve a 9 year term would be set at $50,000 a year, to be increased by an additional $250 for each month of service up to a maximum of $75,000 per year. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly keep the level of support costs to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research under review.

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Political changes following the Soviet Union's breakup and the liberalization of the global economy have increased the magnitude and complexity of illicit drug trafficking, according to reports before the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The Commission, which is the principle UN policy-making body on drug control, is meeting in Vienna 14 to 23 March. It will examine the strengths and weaknesses of existing drug control measures, how to harmonize national laws, and ways to encourage non-governmental organizations and the private sector in drug control efforts.

The Commission will also consider how to strengthen the fight against international criminal drug organizations and penalties for drug-trafficking related offenses such as money laundering and illegal arms trade. Ways to eradicate the growing and dangerous links between terrorist groups, drug traffickers and their paramilitary gangs will also be examined.

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The United Nations 1995 Population Award will be shared by Dr. Halfdan Mahler Secretary-General of the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children. The Population Award is presented annually to individuals and institutions which have made outstanding contributions to increasing awareness of population problems.

The Inter-African Committee was founded in 1984 to fight traditional practices harmful to women and children's health, especially female genital mutilation. It also combats other traditions such as forced feeding of women, early childhood marriages and teenage pregnancies. Dr. Halfden Mahler was chosen for his leadership in reproductive health, family planning and worldwide population issues.

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